

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ  
ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ  
ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ  
Welcome to  
PARENTHOOD  
ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ  
ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ  
ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ  
ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ



A FAMILY GUIDE



*State of New York*

*Libby Pataki  
First Lady*



Dear Friends,

As the parents of four children, George and I know full well the joy and pride of parenthood, as well as the enormous responsibility it requires. Raising our children is the hardest job any of us will ever do, and the most important one, too.

As every new parent quickly learns, the bonds that we create with our children in their first weeks and months of life will have a dramatic impact on their future. The way we take care of our infants, the time we spend with them, and the lessons we teach them will make a big difference in whether they will grow up strong, healthy and happy.

To make sure that all children get a healthy start in life, we changed the law in New York State so that you and every new mother can stay in the hospital at least 48 hours after giving birth. The extra time will ensure that you and your child are physically ready to go home and face the challenges of family life.

This booklet, *Welcome to Parenthood: A Family Guide*, can help you do that. It contains useful information for new parents, encouragement and advice, and suggestions about health care. For instance, did you know that children under 14 are eligible for medical coverage under Medicaid if your family qualifies financially? Uninsured children who aren't Medicaid-eligible can get coverage through 18 with Child Health Plus. New York State also has a **Growing Up Healthy Hotline** that you can call **toll-free** at **1-800-522-5006** for information about immunizations for babies and toddlers, nutrition, injury prevention, and help for children with disabilities and other special health care needs.

We all want what's best for our children. As you welcome a new child into your family, George and I encourage you to use this booklet to get the help and support you need to give your baby every chance for health and happiness.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature of Libby Pataki in black ink. The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Libby Pataki

# Welcome to Parenthood:

## A FAMILY GUIDE

Welcome to parenthood! The day you have been waiting for has arrived. You have so much to look forward to! Right now, you might have lots of questions:

- WHAT WILL MY BABY BE LIKE?
- HOW WILL MY BABY FIT INTO MY FAMILY?
- CAN I TAKE CARE OF MY BABY AND DO EVERYTHING ELSE I HAVE TO DO?
- WILL I BE A GOOD PARENT?
- WILL MY BABY LOVE ME?

REMEMBER, BEING A PARENT IS FUN. IT IS ALSO HARD WORK. Everyone needs help and advice to be a good parent.

Welcome to Parenthood: A Family Guide is a special book written just for you. Inside, there are good tips about how to manage life with a new baby.

You'll find information about:

- TAKING CARE OF YOUR NEW BABY.
- DEALING WITH PROBLEMS, LIKE HOW TO STOP A BABY FROM CRYING.
- GETTING ENOUGH SLEEP, EATING RIGHT, AND OTHER WAYS TO TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF.
- FINDING HELP AND SUPPORT IN YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD.



# Bringing Your Baby Home From The Hospital:

## A CHECKLIST

Coming home is a big event. It helps to have things ready before you leave the hospital. Here are some of the things you'll need:

### ✓ A SAFE PLACE FOR YOUR BABY TO SLEEP

Make sure that the space between crib bars is no wider than 2-3/8 inches so that the baby's head won't get caught. If you are using an older painted crib, beware of lead paint. Call your local health department for more information.

### ✓ A SAFE INFANT CAR SEAT

You can't take your baby home in a car without one. Many agencies loan infant car seats for free and provide important information on how to properly install and use the seat. Ask your doctor or nurse about how to get a car seat.

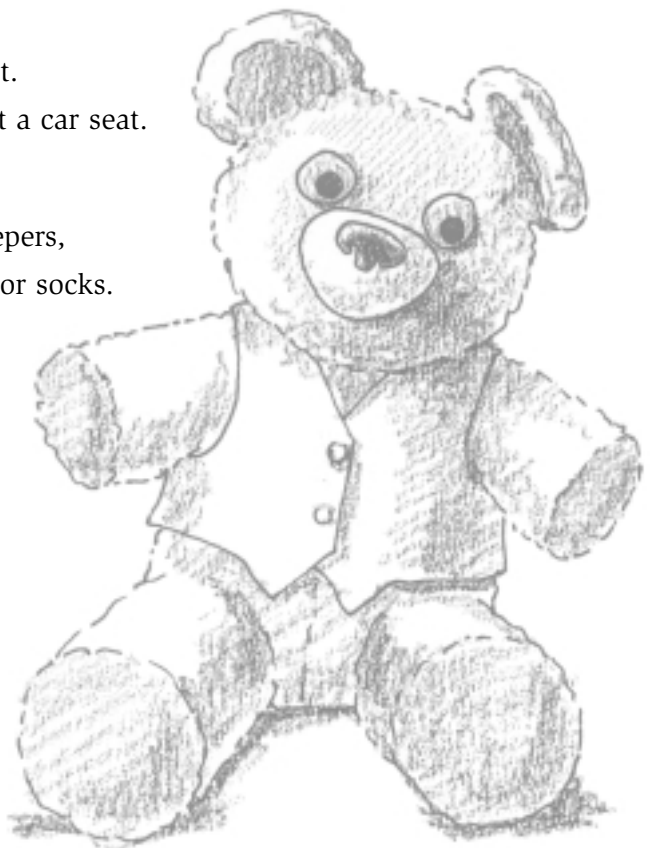
### ✓ BABY CLOTHES

Your baby needs cotton t-shirts, warm sleepers, some stretch suits, a sweater, and booties or socks.

### ✓ LOTS OF SUPPLIES

Have plenty of diapers, mild soap, baby shampoo, Q-tips, ointment, and a thermometer on hand.

If you need help getting things for your baby, BE SURE TO ASK!



BEFORE YOU GO HOME, ask your doctor and nurses any questions you have about:

- BREASTFEEDING OR BOTTLEFEEDING
- DIAPERING, BATHING  
AND DRESSING YOUR BABY
- HOW TO HOLD YOUR BABY
- HOW TO LAY YOUR BABY DOWN IN A CRIB  
Put your baby on his or her back to  
sleep to help prevent Sudden Infant  
Death Syndrome (SIDS).
- HOW TO TELL IF YOUR BABY IS SICK
- WHAT TO DO AND WHO TO CALL  
WHEN YOUR BABY DOES GET SICK





# CONGRATULATIONS!

## You Have A New Baby!

This is a very exciting time. You have a lot to learn about your baby and about yourself. As your baby grows, so will you!

You may have different feelings:

- **RELIEF:** Pregnancy and birth are over. You have a new baby to love.
- **EXHAUSTION:** You are very tired right now. All new parents are.
- **HAPPINESS:** Having a baby can make you very happy. But if you aren't jumping for joy, relax! Soon you'll start to feel better and more like yourself.
- **WORRY:** You want to be a good parent. You are not sure that you will be. Don't worry! All new parents feel shaky at first.

All of these feelings are normal. It's fun to be a parent. But, it's a big job to raise a child. All parents need help and support to be good parents. Babies are born into many kinds of families. Moms and Dads may live together - or they may not. Some babies live close to their grandparents, aunts and uncles. Others live far away from relatives. Some babies have parents that work and some have a parent at home. Babies can do well in all of these families. So can parents. But whatever your family is like, you will need help.

Think about the people you can count on to help you. Your own parents can lend a hand with baby care. The baby's grandparents can often make great babysitters and caregivers. So can aunts, uncles, and close friends whom you trust. Do you need someone to talk to? Friends and neighbors who know what it's like to be a new parent can be good listeners.

Write down some names and phone numbers on the next page. Keep this book close at hand, so you know where to find them.

## When I Need Someone To Take Care Of The Baby, I Can Call:

Name	Phone
------	-------

Name	Phone
------	-------

## When I Need Someone To Talk To, I Can Call:

Name	Phone
------	-------

Name	Phone
------	-------

## When I Have Questions About Baby Care, I Can Call:

### BABY'S DOCTOR:

Name	Phone
------	-------

### HOSPITAL NURSERY:

(many hospitals have a “warm”  
line to get parents through the  
first few nights at home)

Name	Phone
------	-------

Name	Phone
------	-------

### MY DOCTOR OR NURSE-MIDWIFE:

Name	Phone
------	-------

### PUBLIC HEALTH NURSE OR VISITING NURSE:

Name	Phone
------	-------

### COUNTY HEALTH CLINIC:

Name	Phone
------	-------

### EMERGENCY:

(911, Poison Control Center)

Name	Phone
------	-------

You may feel very lonely right now. Staying home all the time can make you feel that way...with or without a baby! Remember, there are lots of places you can go and things you can do with a new baby. Try to find other parents to talk to. If you went to prenatal or childbirth classes, the friends you made there can be wonderful supporters. Look for a parent support group in your neighborhood, town, or city.

Start by calling your public library. Ask for someone in Children's Services. Many public libraries have programs for parents and children. Libraries have wonderful books. Best of all - the books are free.

Call your County Cooperative Extension Office. Every county has one. Cooperative Extension Offices have lots of programs and materials for parents. Or call your local health department, community health center or daycare provider.

*Write down the phone numbers of places to call in your community on the next page.*





## When I Need Support, I Can Call:

PUBLIC LIBRARY

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Phone

COUNTY COOPERATIVE EXTENSION

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Phone

ADULT EDUCATION SERVICES

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Phone

PARISH, CHURCH OR SYNAGOGUE

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Phone

COMMUNITY SERVICE CENTER

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Phone

CHILDBIRTH EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Phone

YWCA OR YMCA

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Phone

JEWISH COMMUNITY CENTER

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Phone

LOCAL SELF-HELP CLEARINGHOUSE

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Phone

COUNTY MENTAL HEALTH CLINIC OR  
COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH CENTER

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Phone

COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTER

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Phone

LOCAL HEALTH DEPARTMENT

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Phone

THERE ARE MANY OTHER PLACES TO CALL FOR HELP.

REMEMBER, YOU ARE NOT ALONE!

# Learning To Love Your Baby

The first job for parents and babies is to learn to love each other. Many parents think they will love their babies “at first sight.” It may take time. Don’t be upset if you have mixed feelings at first.

## GETTING TO KNOW YOU

Getting to know your baby is the first step to loving your baby. Up to now, you could only imagine what your baby would be like. Now you know! Your baby may be a surprise to you. For instance, your baby may look differently than you thought. Many babies have different-shaped heads, bow legs, no hair or lots of hair.

*No two babies are alike! Your baby may act differently than you thought:*

- Some babies are “active” babies. They move a lot. They wiggle. They wave their arms and kick their legs. Other babies are “quiet.” They are calm. They sleep a lot.
- Some babies sleep and eat about the same time every day. Some don’t.
- Some babies like new places, people, and toys. Other babies only like what they know. It takes time for them to warm up to new people and things.
- Some babies don’t like too much light or noise. They get upset when they are wet, too cold, or too hot.
- Some babies can pay attention for a long time. Other babies get bored quickly.
- Some babies can calm down by themselves. Other babies need to be held or talked to.
- Some babies are cuddlers and some are squirmers.

*Finding out everything about your baby is one of the first joys of parenting!*

# BABY CARE: A LABOR OF LOVE

The daily chores of feeding, diapering, bathing, and dressing your baby are good ways to learn about each other. You might be worried that you won't know what your baby needs. Don't be!

Babies let you know what they need by crying. It is the best way they can tell you if they are sleepy, lonely, hungry, scared, too hot, too cold, colicky, in pain, or sick.

At first, you might have to try a few things to make your baby happy. In a short time, you will be able to tell a "hungry cry" from a "sleepy cry."

Cries can also let you know when your baby is sick. Does your baby's cry sound strange? Has your baby been crying longer and louder than usual? Call the baby's doctor or health clinic. They can tell you what to do.

Sometimes babies cry when they don't "need" anything. Just like you, babies have to get rid of pent-up energy. Babies do this by crying. Many babies have "fussy periods" every day. Often, these fussy times come at the end of the day.

A crying baby who won't stop crying can be upsetting! Try to stay calm. Babies can tell when you are upset. This makes them cry louder and harder. And here is an ***IMPORTANT WARNING FOR ALL PARENTS — NO MATTER HOW IMPATIENT OR ANGRY YOU FEEL, NEVER SHAKE OR HIT YOUR BABY!*** Hard shaking can cause brain damage, blindness, hearing loss, learning problems, seizures, cerebral palsy, paralysis or even death. Never hold or pick up a baby when you feel angry. Be sure to tell everyone who takes care of your baby that they should ***NEVER SHAKE OR HIT*** your baby for any reason.



Here are some tips to sooth a crying baby:

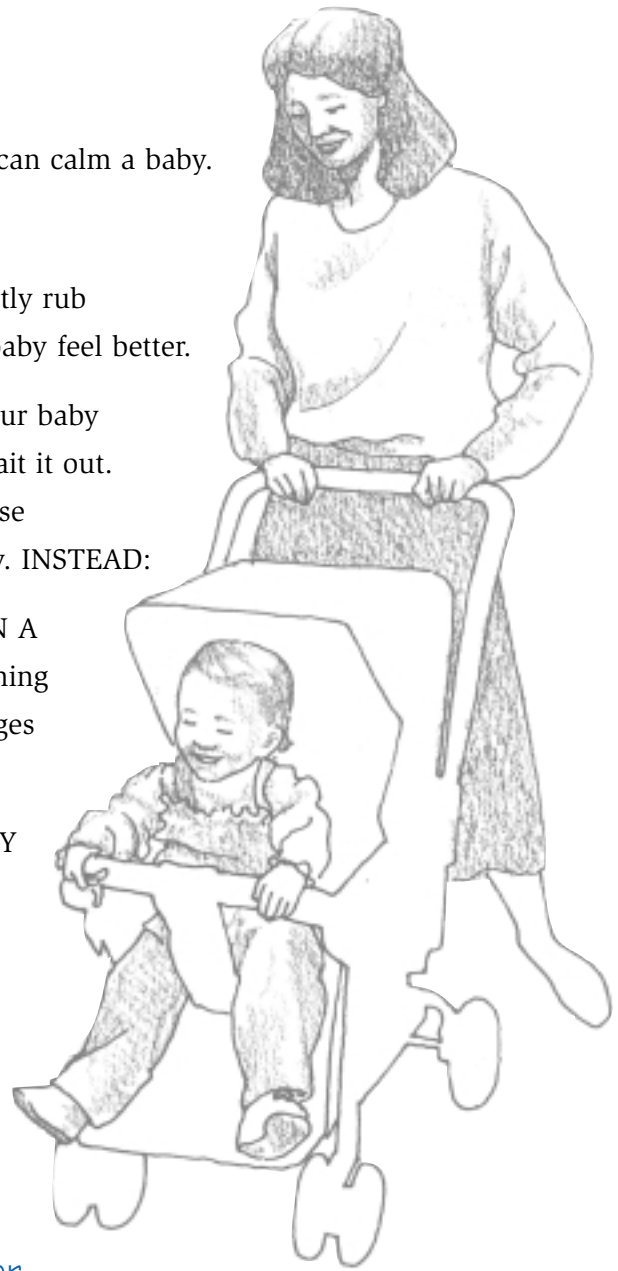
- Gently rock your baby.
- Sing or talk to your baby.
- Play a record or turn on the radio. Music can calm a baby.
- Take your baby for a walk in the stroller.
- Lay your baby on his or her back and gently rub the baby's stomach. This may help your baby feel better.

Have you tried all these tricks? Are you sure your baby isn't sick? The only thing you can do now is wait it out.

If you start to feel upset, take a break! Don't lose your temper — that won't help you or the baby. **INSTEAD:**

- PUT THE BABY DOWN FOR A WHILE IN A SAFE PLACE. Have a cup of tea or something hot to drink (but do not drink hot beverages while holding your baby).
- THINK ABOUT HOW SWEET YOUR BABY IS WHEN SHE OR HE ISN'T CRYING. Remember the things you like best about your baby.
- CALL SOMEONE YOU TRUST TO HELP. Let that person take care of the baby while you relax.

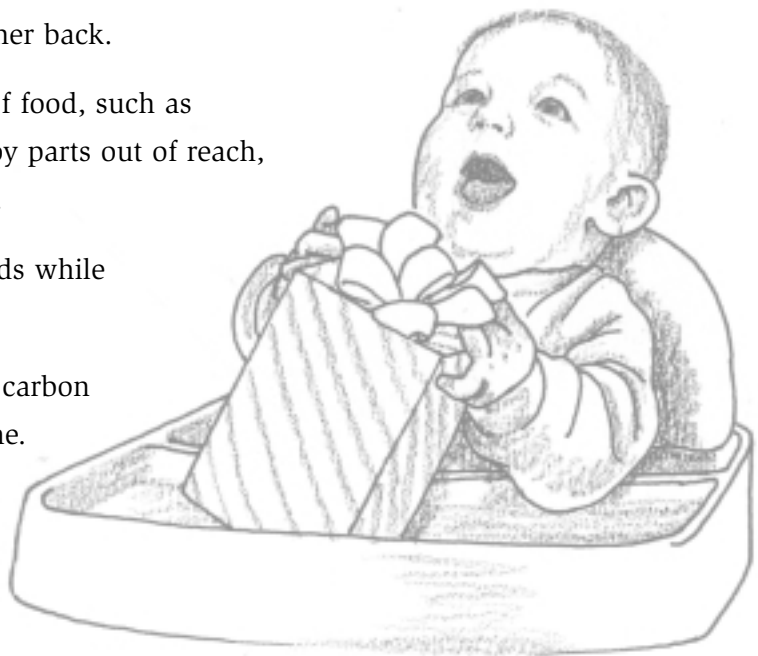
*If your baby has been crying for a very long time, call the baby's doctor or health clinic. It's the only way to be sure your baby isn't sick.*



# IMPORTANT SAFETY TIPS!

*Some parents don't worry about safety until their babies are older. Injuries can happen at any age. To keep your baby safe, remember:*

- Always use a rear-facing infant car seat that is properly secured in the middle of the back seat when transporting your baby.
- Set the hot water thermostat at less than 120 degrees Fahrenheit or, if you can't lower the temperature, use an anti-scald device.
- Test the water temperature with your open hand and swish it around to make sure it is not too hot before bathing the baby.
- Put cleaning products and other poisonous materials out of reach and in childproof cabinets and containers.
- Do not leave your baby alone in a tub of water or on a changing table, bed, sofa or chair. Always keep one hand on the baby.
- Only use a crib that has slats that are less than 2-3/8 inches apart. Use a firm mattress that fits snugly to the crib. Do not put the baby to sleep on a soft surface, such as a waterbed, couch or pillow.
- Put the baby to sleep on his or her back.
- Do not feed your baby chunks of food, such as grapes or hot dog. Keep small toy parts out of reach, they can pose a choking hazard.
- Do not smoke or drink hot liquids while holding your baby.
- Install and maintain smoke and carbon monoxide detectors in your home.
- Never leave baby alone with a young brother or sister, or pet.



# THE JOY OF PLAYING

Take some time each day to play with your baby. Hold your baby. Some babies love to snuggle up close. Others like to be held gently in your arms or across your lap. Holding your baby will make you feel good — and make your baby feel loved.

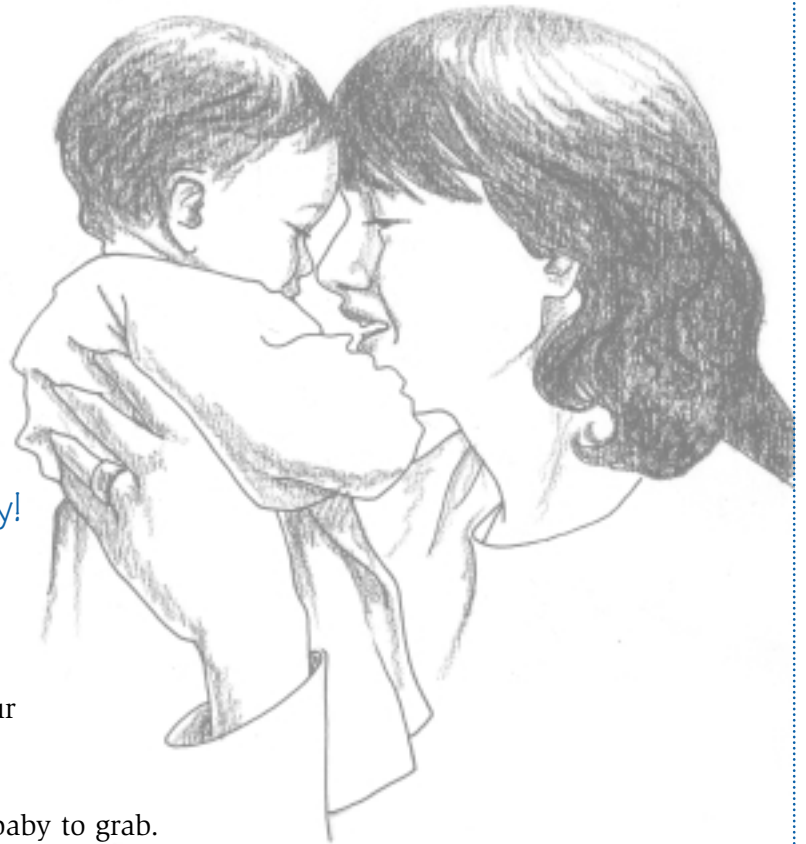
*Playtime is important and fun for both of you. Games teach babies to:*

- Use their bodies.
- Make sounds.
- Think.
- Feel good about themselves.
- Get along with people.
- Feel good about the person taking care of them.

*You are your baby's best toy!  
Try some of these simple  
games together:*

- Talk to your baby. Listen to the sounds your baby makes. If your baby gurgles — gurgle back!
- Hold your fingers out for your baby to grab. Babies love to practice grabbing.
- Look into your baby's eyes. Sing, talk, or make cooing sounds. Move your head slowly from side to side in front of your baby. Babies love to look at faces and follow the sound of a voice — especially yours.

*Games help your baby learn who you are. Keep at it. Soon, your baby will reward you with a great big smile.*





This checklist will help you to know what you can expect your child to be doing for the next three years. If you have a concern, call your physician or local Early Intervention Program.

3 MONTHS	6 MONTHS	12 MONTHS
<i>At three months of age, most babies:</i>	<i>At six months of age, most babies:</i>	<i>At 12 months of age, most babies:</i>
Turn their heads toward bright colors and lights.	Follow moving objects with their eyes.	Sit without support.
Move both eyes in the same direction.	Turn toward the source of normal sound.	Pull to a standing position.
Recognize bottle or breast.	Reach for objects and pick them up.	Drink from a cup.
React to sudden sounds or voices.	Switch toys from one hand to another.	Crawl.
Make cooing sounds.	Play with their toes.	Play peek-a-boo and patty cake.
Make fists with both hands.	Help hold the bottle during feeding.	Wave bye-bye.
Grasp toys or hair.	Recognize familiar faces.	Hold out their arms and legs while being dressed.
Wiggle and kick with arms and legs.	Babble.	Put objects in a container.
Lift head and chest when on stomach.		Stack two blocks.
Smile.		Know five or six words.

*The early years of a child's life are very important. During the infant and toddler years (0-3), children grow quickly and have so much to learn. Some children and families face special challenges and may need extra help. Early Help Makes A Difference!*

*If your child is having trouble doing things that other children his or her age are doing, it may put your mind at rest to talk to someone. Talk with your doctor or call your local Early Intervention Program. For the phone number of your county's program, call the New York State "Growing Up Healthy," 24-hour hotline at 1-800-522-5006. In New York City, call 1-800-577-2229.*

18 MONTHS	24 MONTHS	36 MONTHS
<i>At 1-1/2 years of age, most babies:</i>	<i>At two years of age, most babies:</i>	<i>At three years of age, most babies:</i>
Like to pull, push and dump things.	Use two-to-three-word sentences.	Walk up steps (alternating feet).
Follow simple directions ("bring the ball").	Say names of toys.	Ride a tricycle.
Pull off shoes, socks and mittens.	Recognize familiar pictures.	Put on their shoes.
Like to look at pictures.	Carry something while walking.	Open a door.
Feed themselves.	Feed themselves with a spoon.	Turn one page at a time.
Make marks on paper with crayons.	Play independently.	Play with other children for a few minutes.
Walk without help.	Turn 2-3 pages at a time.	Repeat common rhymes.
Step off a low object and keep balance.	Like to imitate their parents.	Use three-to five-word sentences.
	Identify hair, eyes, ears and nose by pointing.	Name at least one color correctly.
	Build a tower of four blocks.	Are toilet trained.
	Show affection.	

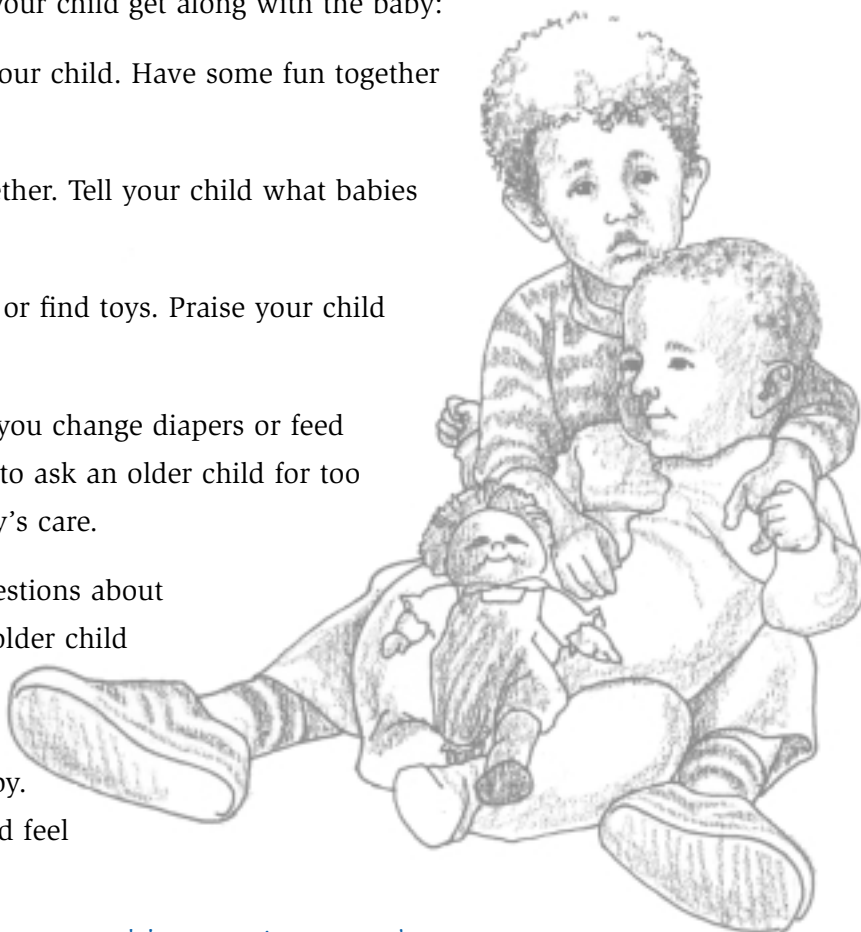
# SIBLINGS, SAY HELLO TO YOUR NEW SISTER? BROTHER?

The first time your baby meets sisters or brothers can be tricky. The kinds of problems you have will depend on the age of the older children. Younger children often say to their parents: “Let’s take the baby back now, OKAY?”

It isn’t easy to take care of the baby and a young child, too. Your child will miss being the center of attention. Many young children suddenly act like babies again. If your child asks for a bottle or sucks a thumb, try to be patient. This is normal.

You know, babies don’t get jealous! But your toddler, preschooler, gradeschooler or teenager might be jealous of a new baby. (Even if they don’t admit it.) There are lots of things you can do to help your child get along with the baby:

- Spend time alone with your child. Have some fun together while the baby is asleep.
- Talk about the baby together. Tell your child what babies need and what they like.
- Toddlers can get diapers or find toys. Praise your child for being a good helper.
- An older child can help you change diapers or feed the baby. Be careful not to ask an older child for too much help with the baby’s care.
- Visitors have a lot of questions about the new baby. Let your older child tell visitors how much the baby weighs and what you named the baby. This will make your child feel very special.



*Some children have more trouble getting used to a new baby. If you’re worried about your child, call your child’s doctor or nurse for advice.*

## PARENT SURVIVAL TIPS

Most parents of newborns have a lot of ups and downs. You feel happy, proud, and excited in one day. You feel sad, lonely, or depressed the next. Don't worry, that's just the "after-baby blues."

What brings on the "after-baby blues?" It could be that:

- As a new Mom, the "after-baby blues" are part of the changes your body goes through after birth.
- You got lots of attention before the baby came. Now, the baby is getting all that attention. You feel a little left out.
- You worry that something will happen to your new baby.
- You worry that something will happen to you.
- If you are a Dad of a newborn, watching your partner get the "after-baby blues" can give you the blues.

*You might be asking, "How am I going to deal with all these changes and new feelings?" A good way to start is to take care of YOURSELF.*

## GETTING SOME SLEEP

You need to get plenty of rest, especially in the first few weeks. Try to:

- Ask someone close to you to help out while you rest. Be sure you ask someone you get along with and trust.
- Keep visits from relatives and friends short — unless they come to help you out.
- Let some things go for a while. Sleep is more important to you right now than a clean house. The dishes will wait!

Getting enough sleep is a problem for all parents. Newborns sleep about 15 to 16 hours a day. But, babies sleep on a different schedule than adults. They take lots of “naps.” A two-week-old baby will only sleep for 3 or 4 hours before waking up to be fed. By four months, some babies will sleep up to 8 hours at a stretch. But other babies can take even longer to learn to sleep through the night.

**YOU STILL NEED YOUR SLEEP.** If your baby likes to sleep during the day and is awake at night, try to:

- Bathe the baby in the early evening. This will help the baby stay up while you are awake and sleep longer while you are asleep.
- Set up a bedtime routine — singing, hugs and kisses. Follow this routine every night. Soon, your baby will learn that being in bed means going to sleep.

*By using these tips, you can help your baby form sleep habits that make you happy. In the meantime, sleep when the baby sleeps.*

## TAKING TIME FOR YOU

A baby can take over your life! Your baby depends on you for everything. A few simple steps can help you stay in control:

- **ASK FOR HELP WHEN YOU NEED IT.** Ask someone you trust to watch the baby while you take time away.
- **DO SOMETHING YOU REALLY LIKE WHEN YOUR BABY IS SLEEPING.** Take a bath. Read a book. Watch TV. Listen to the radio. Exercise. Get some sleep!
- **DON'T EXPECT TO BE PERFECT.** The super-parents you see on TV are not real people. Everyone makes mistakes.
- **GET OUT OF THE HOUSE.** Take your baby along. A short walk to the store or a visit to a friend can work miracles.
- **FIND ANOTHER PARENT TO TALK TO AND DO THINGS WITH.** Other new parents will understand you. You can have a good laugh — or a good cry — together.
- **REMEMBER THAT YOU ARE IN CHARGE OF YOUR BABY.** You may not agree with the advice of relatives or friends. Follow your own feelings. Or ask your doctor or nurse. There's no such thing as a “dumb” question.

## SOME SPECIAL NOTES FOR MOMS

Your body has been hard at work for the past nine months. If you feel like you deserve a break, it's because you do!

There are three things you can do to feel better faster:

**GET ENOUGH SLEEP. EAT RIGHT. EXERCISE.**

Eating right is very important. Are you breastfeeding? Your doctor, nutritionist or nurse-midwife can give you the best advice about what you should eat to nourish your baby. Some basic rules for all Moms are:

- **EAT THREE MEALS A DAY.** Eat the foods you like. Be sure to eat some foods from these four lists:
  - Milk, cheese, ice cream, yogurt, or other milk products. If you have allergies to milk, ask about other foods to eat.
  - Fish, nuts, meats, and eggs.
  - Fruits and vegetables.
  - Pasta, rice, oats, whole grain breads, grits.
- **DRINK PLENTY OF WATER, JUICE, AND MILK.**
- **DO NOT DRINK THINGS THAT CONTAIN CAFFEINE (COFFEE, TEA AND SOME KINDS OF SODA), IF YOU ARE BREASTFEEDING.** Your doctor will tell you not to drink alcohol, smoke or use illegal drugs.
- **ASK FOR AN EASY EXERCISE PROGRAM.** You will loose weight gradually.
- **TALK TO YOUR DOCTOR ABOUT DIABETES.** If you developed diabetes during your pregnancy, it will go away after your child's birth. However, you may develop diabetes in the future. Make sure you are tested for diabetes, especially if you become pregnant again.



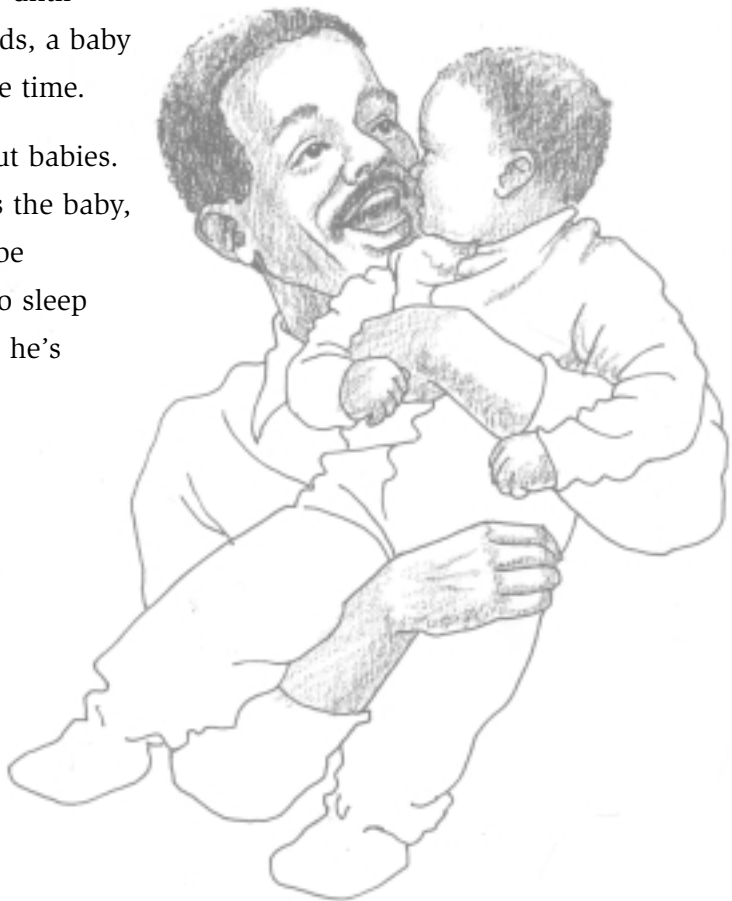
## AN IMPORTANT WORD ABOUT POSTPARTUM DEPRESSION

Postpartum depression is a special problem that all mothers need to know about. Many mothers have the “after-baby blues.” **But, if you always feel sad and never have any energy, you could have postpartum depression. Postpartum depression is a physical and emotional problem that can be treated.** Call your doctor, nurse-midwife, county health clinic, or public health nurse. They can help you. Be sure to get help if you are really feeling depressed.

## DADS CAN HELP WITH BABY CARE

Many new Moms are afraid to let Dads take care of the baby. Dads are parents, too. Some Dads jump right into the act. Other Dads aren’t sure what to do. Many men never have a chance to get to know a baby until their own babies are born. So for Dads, a baby can be exciting and scary at the same time.

You can help your partner learn about babies. Ask him to change the diapers, dress the baby, and give the baby a bath. Dads can be wonderful at gently rocking a baby to sleep for the night. Tell your partner when he’s doing a good job with the baby.



## SOME SPECIAL NOTES FOR DADS

Dads have so much to offer their babies. Some Dads feel a little shy about helping out with the baby, at first. Don't be! Changing diapers, getting the baby dressed are great ways to get to know your baby.

Sometimes, Dads have to work harder to be a part of their babies' lives. Doctors and nurses often pay more attention to Mom and the baby. Tell them that you want to give your baby good care and you want to learn how. Ask questions.

Remember, your baby needs your love. A Dad's love and care make babies feel good and secure. Also:

- Children need to know that men take care of children, too. By taking care of your new baby, you are teaching your children that men make good parents.
- It's good for your baby to learn what men are like. Your baby will like hearing your deeper voice and will feel safe in your larger arms and hands.
- Your partner needs your help and support, too. Tell her she's doing a good job with the baby.

## TAKE TIME FOR EACH OTHER

Many new parents think that having a baby will make them feel closer than ever. Sometimes, it does. Many parents also feel like their relationship is being put to the test. It's harder to get along when you are tired. You don't have much time for each other. Do you feel like all the romance is gone? Remember, you really do need each other.

- Find some time to be alone together. Talk to each other. Share your feelings about being new parents — the good and not-so-good things.
- Make a date with each other. Get someone you trust to take care of the baby. Go out. Have some fun!
- Be good to each other. You both need extra love and attention right now. And don't worry — your love life will get back to normal.

# YOUR BABY'S MEDICAL HOME

All babies need a “medical home.” A medical home is the doctor, nurse, physician’s assistant or healthcare team who takes care of your baby’s health as he or she grows and develops from an infant to a toddler, to a preschooler, and all throughout childhood and adolescence. A medical home is the place you always bring your baby for a check up or when your baby is sick. And, a medical home is the place where you go with questions and concerns about your baby’s health and development.

Health insurance is available for your baby and your older children, too. Children in your family who are 14 years of age or younger are eligible for Medicaid coverage if your family qualifies financially. All Medicaid-eligible children are provided with 12 months of continuous coverage, even if your family’s income exceeds eligibility levels during that period.

If you need health insurance to pay for your **baby’s** care, New York State’s **Child Health Plus** program can help.

**Child Health Plus** pays for:

- Regular visits to the doctor;
- Visits to the doctor when your baby is sick;
- Hospital care for your baby if needed.

To be eligible for Child Health Plus –

- You and your baby must live in New York State.
- Your family must either have insurance that doesn’t cover your baby’s needs or have no health insurance.
- Your children must be under the age of 19.

**To find out more about Child Health Plus, call toll-free 1-800-698-4543.**

The best beginning you can give your baby is good health care! Your baby should start getting **regular health care** right after birth. This includes:

- A FIRST check-up at birth in the hospital or birthing center.
- Routine check-ups at 1 month, 2 months, 4 months, 6 months, 9 months, 12 months, 15 months, 18 months, 24 months and, then, every year, until your child is six years of age.

Your baby's routine check-ups will include:

- Height, weight and head measurements
- Vision and hearing tests
- A check to make sure your baby is developing and growing
- Physical examinations
- Shots to keep your baby safe from common illnesses
- Lead poisoning screening
- Information for *YOU* about how to take care of your baby

*Ask questions!* Your doctor or nurse can help you understand your baby's health and give you advice if you think there is a problem. Remember, your baby's good health **DEPENDS ON YOU**. And remember, injuries can happen at any age! Ask your doctor what you can do to keep your baby safe.

*Always call your doctor or clinic if your baby:*

- Has a very high fever.
- Has a strange skin rash.
- Has an injury or bleeding that cannot be stopped by pressure.
- Has difficulty breathing.
- Has been vomiting and seems to be in pain.
- Has diarrhea.
- Is very cranky or fussy.
- Looks sick.

- **NEWBORN SCREENING FOR HEALTH PROBLEMS THAT NEED EARLY TREATMENT.**

Some babies are born with health problems that can harm growth and development. Early treatment can keep babies healthy and further their development.

In New York State, all babies are tested at birth for seven health problems. To do this, a tiny blood sample will be taken from the baby's heel before he or she goes home.

You will get your baby's test results only if there is a problem. You may be asked to have your baby retested. Don't panic. It's more likely a problem with the blood test, not the baby.

- **CHECKING YOUR BABY'S HEARING.**

Your baby's ability to hear your voice and other sounds clearly may be affected for a variety of reasons. Doctors can test a baby's full range of hearing to detect problems.

To help detect any hearing problems:

- Pay attention to your baby's response to sound.
- If you have concerns, ask your doctor to refer you to someone who can test young infants for hearing impairment.

The sooner hearing loss is detected and treated, the better your child's language development will be. Some hospitals even test babies' hearing in the hospital before they are discharged!



- **SHOTS (IMMUNIZATIONS) ARE IMPORTANT TO YOUR BABY'S GOOD HEALTH.**

They protect your baby from 10 diseases: measles, mumps, rubella, polio, Haemophilus influenza type b (Hib disease), hepatitis B, diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis (whooping cough) and varicella (chickenpox).

To keep your baby healthy:

- Make sure you bring your baby for regular check-ups – from the time your baby is born. The first shot your baby should get is the hepatitis B vaccine. Your baby should get a first shot at birth, and “booster shots” in the first few months of life.
- Other shots will begin at two months of age. Your child will get shots until his or her second birthday.
- Booster doses of some vaccines must be given to your child before starting kindergarten.
- Bring your baby's immunization record card to **every** check-up. Keep the card up to date. Make sure the doctor or nurse fills it out each time your baby gets a shot. You will need this information for your baby to go to day care or school.

- **LEAD SCREENING HELPS KEEP YOUR BABY SAFE FROM LEAD POISONING.**

Very young children are curious! They love to explore. But lead poisoning from lead paint, chips and dust, and lead in water, can interfere with growth, harm hearing, lower IQ scores and cause behavioral problems. There are usually no signs or symptoms until a child is seriously ill with lead poisoning. To check for lead poisoning, have a simple blood test for lead at regular appointments around your child's first and second birthdays.

You can get an early start protecting your baby from lead by:

- Using cold tap water, not hot, to make infant formula. Let the cold water run for at least a minute to remove any lead picked up from the pipes.
- Using iron-fortified infant formula and cereals for toddlers, to help lower your baby's lead risk.
- Washing your baby's hands, pacifier and toys often.



- Being sure your toddler doesn't put paint chips or plaster in his or her mouth, or chew on windowsills or stair rails.
- Damp mopping floors to remove lead dust.
- Keeping your toddler out of the house during any home renovations.

## FINALLY – A SPECIAL HEALTH ALERT!

**Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS)** is the sudden and unexplained death of an infant, under one year of age, who seems perfectly healthy. Doctors and nurses don't know what causes SIDS, sometimes known as crib death, but here are some things you can do to make your baby safer:

- Put your baby on his or her back to sleep. Do this when your baby is being put down for a nap or for the night.
- Check with your doctor to make sure your baby can sleep on his or her back. Most babies can, but a few babies have health conditions that require them to sleep on their stomachs.
- Make sure your baby sleeps on a firm mattress or other firm surface. Don't use fluffy blankets or comforters under the baby.
- When your baby is very young, don't put stuffed toys or pillows in the crib with him or her.
- Don't allow anyone to smoke around your baby.

*For information or support regarding the sudden death of an infant, from any cause, call the New York State Center for Sudden Infant Death at 1-800-336-SIDS (800-336-7437).*

# When Babies Need Special Medical Care

Even when you get the very best care, things can go wrong. Some babies are born too soon. Some babies are sick when they are born, or they have disabilities. Birth may be a difficult and confusing time — not the joyful, happy time that you expected.

Your baby may have to stay in the hospital for a long time. You may have to leave the hospital without your baby. If there is a problem with your baby, try not to blame yourself or your partner. You need each other.

No matter what the problem, you can learn to take care of your baby. Babies with problems need a lot of love and they can give a lot of love, too. One of the hardest feelings that goes along with a very sick baby is **loss of control over your life**. Take every step you can to help your baby and yourself:

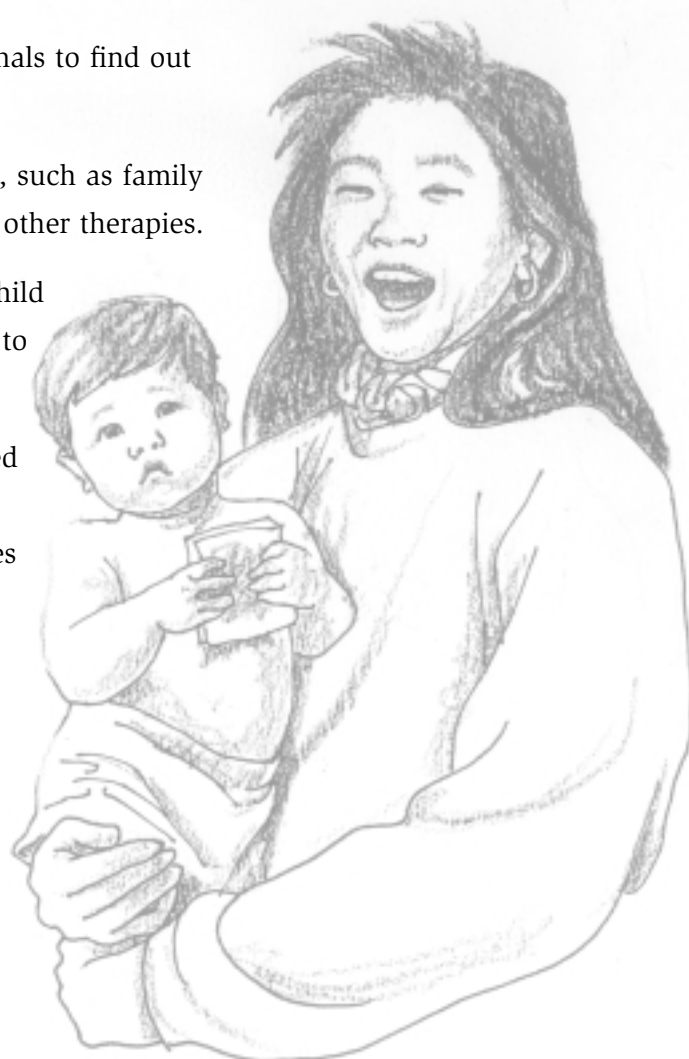
- Ask the doctor questions. If you have trouble understanding what's wrong, ask again. Make the doctor explain what's wrong in a way that you can understand.
- Talk about your feelings with your partner.
- Talk to other parents who have children with special needs. Look for a support group.
- If your baby has a serious medical problem, he or she may require expensive medical care or equipment and medication. If you have no health insurance or your insurance is inadequate, help may be available from the Children with Special Health Care Needs Program.

- Ask your doctor or health care provider about the New York State Early Intervention Program. The statewide Early Intervention Program provides many different types of services to infants and toddlers with disabilities and their families. The services are free to eligible children and families. And, any child can get a free evaluation if a parent or doctor, or other professional is concerned about his or her development. Early Intervention services include:

- Evaluation by qualified professionals to find out if children are eligible.
- Therapeutic and support services, such as family counseling, speech, physical and other therapies.
- Respite or temporary care for a child with a disability to provide relief to the family and reduce stress.

Early intervention services can be provided to families at home or anywhere in the community! Early intervention services can help you and your family:

- Learn the best ways to care for your child.
- Support and promote your child's development.
- Include your child in your family and community life.



To find out more about the Early Intervention Program, Children with Special Health Care Needs Program, and other health care services, call the New York State “Growing Up Healthy” 24-hour Hotline at 1-800-522-5006. Ask for the phone number of your county’s program. In New York City, call 1-800-577-2229.



**State of New York**  
George E. Pataki, Governor  
**Department of Health**  
Antonia C. Novello, M.D., M.P.H., Dr.P.H., Commissioner

